DISCOURSE

DELIVERED

AT THE FUNERAL OF

MRS. ANNA POPE.

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MEMORIAL OF A CENTENARIAN.

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE

FUNERAL OF MRS.. ANNA POPE,

OF SPENCER,

JULY 16, 1859.

BY

REV. S. G. DODD,

PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN SPENCER.

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DISCOURSE.

With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation. — Psalm 91 : 16.

Old age, as one of life's appointed periods, hath its own appropriate sphere and mission.

The presence of the aged member of a household, completing the family circle, is of itself salutary in its influence. The young learn lessons of reverence. The middle-aged and the strong are reminded of their own inevitable weakness and decay. Thoughtlessness is sobered. Gayety, in its undue overflowings, is checked.

Gentle and helpful sympathy is called out and fostered.

The spectacle of old age in its accustomed corner, with its whitened locks and wrinkled visage and bowed form, is a continual memento of the real nature and proper objects of human life.

To glorify God in suffering is a higher work than to glorify him in action. To bear the will of God requires a stronger faith than to do the will of God. Christ Jesus reached a higher point in his redemptive work in Gethsemane than when at Bethany he brought forth by his miraculous power Lazarus from the grave. Peter performed a higher service when within the prison walls he maintained his composure and trust than when, on the day of Pentecost, he boldly charged upon the multitude the killing of the Prince of Life.

To remain strong in spirit while the limbs grow weaker, — to keep the eye of faith clear and steady while earthly vision fades, — to remain a cheerful pilgrim still when companions of old have long since fallen by the way, — to exemplify the graces of filial resignation and patience when compassed about with many infirmities, — to preserve the equilibrium of soul spoken of by the aged apostle, "not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life," — this is the high vocation of the aged Christian. Accomplishing this, how beautiful, how influential for good is old age.

Old age hath also its own enjoyments and privileges.

The aged Christian in retirement from the world, calmly reviewing the past, — looking back over all the way by which the Lord has led him, — perceiving the

manifold tokens of providential care and heavenly love, and conscious that all things in life's lot have been made to work for good, — feels sweet and blissful gratitude within; and contemplating the past as the pledge of the future, serenely waits on God.

How satisfying to every pure and noble feeling the sight of the fruits of care and toil and a good example in other years! How grateful and soothing the spontaneous reverent affection, — the gladly willing attentions and service of children and grandchildren and kindred, who say, Blessed art thou!

Thus the hoary head is a crown of glory. Emphatically, blessed are the *aged* dead who die in the Lord, — their works as aged Christians do follow them.

The long life and happy old age of Mrs. Anna Pope, whose decease has convened

us to-day, furnish cause for thanksgiving and congratulation to all her family and friends. To few is vouchsafed such length of days.

The date of her birth, December 16, 1754, takes us back into another age of the world, to the reign of George II., thirty-five years before the French Revolution, twenty-two years before the Declaration of American Independence, two years before the French and Indian war. One of her earliest recollections was that of sitting on the knee of a soldier returned from that war, and asking him if he had killed an Indian. She was a child of five summers when Wolfe fell on the Plains of Abraham. She was fifteen years older than the first Napoleon, and now his nephew at the age of fifty is one of the leading actors on the world's theatre.

Her oldest child, were he living, would be

eighty-one years of age. For the last nineteen years she has been the sole surviving member of her father's family. Thirty-three years have passed since the decease of her husband, at the age of fourscore. Her remaining son has already reached the age of seventy-seven.

In 1777 she was married and removed to Spencer, and has occupied the same house for eighty-two years, and the same room as a sleeping apartment. The house itself was built one hundred and fifteen years ago. The old arm-chair in which she was accustomed to sit, is a relic of the past, having belonged to the father of Rev. J. Eaton, the first pastor of this church. As recently as her last birth-day, she has written her autograph in a legible style. What changes and revolutions have taken place during her lifetime! What discoveries, inventions, improvements have been made! It were superfluous to dwell upon them.

The other part of the text — and show him my salvation — may be taken as applying either to the believer's experience on earth, or to his glorified state as a redeemed spirit. To his penitent, believing child, God shows his salvation on earth. He fills the mind with light, in which the glory and the greatness, the wisdom and the value of that salvation are disclosed to view.

He verifies his promises. He pacifies the troubled conscience. He imparts grace to conquer sin. He sheds abroad his love in the heart. With joy unspeakable and full of glory, Christ the Lord is beheld, by faith, the centre of the kingdom of redemption. The mind finds delighted employment, — the heart finds a pure joy in the contemplation of the unfolding glories of that kingdom, — its multiplied triumphs, and its onward progress.

This promise was verified in the expe-

rience of the deceased. To her, in her life, God showed his salvation, — was ever showing it. The child of parents who had embraced the everlasting covenant, and were persuaded of it, the pledges of the covenant were fulfilled for her. Choosing, with Mary, the good part, and uniting with the people of God ere yet she left her father's house, her days of youthful gayety and bloom were brightened by the light of Christian love and hope.

In 1777 she was united in marriage to Rev. Joseph Pope, then pastor of this church, and came to fill a station for which she was in all respects eminently qualified.

Says one who has known her long, — "Could the incidents of her life be minutely and faithfully related, the narration would be of far greater interest, and far more useful than any of the portraitures of

life in parsonages with which the public have recently been so profusely favored.

"Her husband's residence being on the main road from the western counties of Massachusetts to the capital, was, for a long series of years, the hospitable resting-place of ministers on their way to and from the metropolis.

"One might well wish to be present, if it were possible, at a social gathering of all the venerable men — the Springs and Lymans and Moores and Austins and Emmonses — who so frequently found entertainment in the old parsonage. By her hospitality and courtesy, her house was ever made an attractive place."

Her husband, Rev. Joseph Pope, was born in Pomfret, Conn., 1746; graduated at Harvard University, 1770; ordained, 1773.

"As a preacher," says Rev. Dr. Nelson in a sermon delivered at his funeral, "he

was highly gifted. His sermons were distinguished for sound views of theology, practical instruction, and classic purity of style. Few have exhibited divine truth in a manner more plain or impressive.

"In the intercourse which he maintained with the people of his charge, there was a prudence, a friendliness, a faithful yet affectionate manner of address, which secured esteem and carried his instructions to the heart. As a man he possessed, in an eminent degree, those amiable social qualities which gave an irresistible charm to his conversation.

"The practical features of his religious character were deep humility, a constant dependence on the atonement of Jesus Christ, and an earnest desire for the Spirit of God to teach, to guide, and to sanctify him."

It remains for me to speak of Mrs. Pope

more especially as I knew her in her old age.

My acquaintance with her began when she was near the completion of her one hundredth year. Her health and energy were then, as you know, remarkable. She was able to read large print with magnifying glasses, and could sustain a conversation with one speaking in a voice raised but a little above the ordinary tone.

No one could form even a slight acquaintance with her without being impressed with the vigor of her mind. She readily apprehended any topic of conversation, and appeared as quick to perceive the relations of things as any one.

The pertinency of her observations, and the aptness of her replies, savored more of the vivacity of youth than the lassitude of age. Her memory had begun to fail her for the recollection of things recent, but

was ready and correct for other days and the olden time. Judgment and understanding seemed quite unimpaired.

She loved to dwell on the scenes and incidents of the Revolutionary struggle. Her father, Col. Benjamin Hammond of Newton, was in the battle of Lexington. With much emotion she was wont to speak of her feelings as she followed after him as he rode away from home to join the troops, and of the thrill she experienced when, after the battle, she saw him coming down the road again unharmed.

A vivid impression remained upon her mind of the spectacle of two brothers standing up in the aisle of the church at Newton, the Sabbath after the battle, to give thanks for their deliverance, — bullets having passed through their coats during the fight.

From her father's house she heard the

firing at Bunker Hill, and saw the hot balls flying in the air at night from Boston to the American lines.

It is an interesting fact that three weeks after her coming to Spencer, one division — the half of Burgoyne's army — encamped for the night in the town, — the colonel of one of the Hessian regiments passing the night at her house. Under the circumstances it gave her, no doubt, high satisfaction to entertain him, but her courtesy would not let her exult over a humbled foe.

When speaking of the world-famed destruction of an obnoxious article of import in Boston harbor, I inquired, did you not feel sorry that so much of so costly a substance was destroyed? Straightening herself up in her chair, and looking at me with earnest eyes, from which the spirit of '76 shone, she replied, emphatically,

bringing down her cane upon the floor,— No, sir! we had lost our appetite!

When a girl, she had heard Whitefield preach in the old church at Newton, and could give the text (Romans 8: 15) with some of his characteristic expressions.

Choice poetical pieces — many of them lengthy, as the "Hermit of the Dale," and Watts's "Indian Philosopher" — learned in youth, she was able to recite in full, and was fond of so doing, with marked propriety and force of diction and cadence. At times it was as if she had caught a new glimpse of some event or scene in the far past, long forgotten, and lines or incidents not referred to for years, would be recited or described. Some verses, written by a friend of hers on the death of Rev. Mr. Adams, minister of Roxbury, never printed, which she committed to memory when a girl, were

in this way recalled and repeated within a week.

Gratitude was preëminent. "God has been very good to me," was the uniform testimony she bore to all who talked with her of her past life. "I have experienced nothing but goodness from the hand of my heavenly Father all my days," and this though she had been tried in severe affliction. Called to give up to Death in one week both husband and an only daughter, her joy and her pride — the tidings of her death coming while her husband lay a corpse in the house, — all her children save one stricken down around her, — her husband an invalid for eight years, — a widow herself thirty-three years, — her testimony was, "I have experienced nothing but goodness from the hand of my heavenly Father all my days." "No one was ever more kindly

treated." "God has always given me kind friends." "The Lord is my Shepherd." "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life."

She gloried in the old doctrines of the New England Faith — the distinguishing doctrines of grace. Her soul fed upon them. They were meat indeed and drink indeed. They nourished and strengthened her. Taught at her mother's knee the Westminster Catechism — too much neglected in her view in these days of modern progress — she ever retained her partiality for it, not alone from the force of early associations, but from a comparison of the system therein set forth with the teachings of Scripture. It was familiar to her as the alphabet, and often she occupied the slow hours of night by reciting its articles and reflecting thereon.

With the works of Edwards, Bellamy, and Hopkins she was familiar, and, until her failing eyesight prevented, was accustomed to read them with discrimination and relish.

The 90th, 103d, 16th, and 23d Psalms, with many old familiar hymns, came spontaneously to her lips, and she made them her own, as expressive of her own views and feelings.

For a year or more after passing the century line, she was able to read her Testament and Psalms in large type, by catching a sight of a word here and there, her memory supplying the rest.

Her cheerfulness was uniform. Though shut out from the world, especially the past two or three years, by the greater failure of her sight and hearing — confined to her chair — she never exacted attention; never complained of being neglected; al-

ways deprecated trouble on her account, and had pleasant words for every one. She had at times a playfulness of manner peculiarly winning in one so old.

"I am glad to see you always so cheerful," I once said to her.

She replied with great spirit, "A fretting old thing would be intolerable."

In her cheerful spirit, based on Christian principle, she was a model for young as well as old.

She retained a lively interest in the prosperity of the town, and the welfare of all around her. Her sympathies were especially with the sick and afflicted. Seldom did she omit asking on the Sabbath whether any had sent a note requesting prayers; as also what were the texts of discourse, adding, with a large charity, "No doubt you had an excellent sermon from that text."

Though somewhat reserved in the expression of her most sacred feelings, as was becoming, on suitable occasions she spake freely, always with deep reverence and sincerity.

When bidding farewell to descendants or kindred, never expecting to see them again in this world, she would tenderly refer to the hope of meeting in a better world, and of reunion with loved ones who had gone on before. On one occasion, as she sat in her chair somewhat wearily, a peculiar expression of countenance prompted the inquiry, — Is there any thing that you want? "Oh yes! I want to go to Jesus." Her soul had been turned towards Jesus and his heavenly kingdom, and she felt that to depart and be with Christ was far better. Yet this was never separated from a spirit of meek submission. Even in severe pain she recognized the will of God as allwise and kind.

During paroxyms of suffering, not infrequent the last few months of her life, her prayer for release was always accompanied by a reference to the Lord's will. "If it be the Lord's will may I be released and taken to himself." She often said, "I hope I may never be left to murmur."

A year ago, the first Sabbath of this month, it being our communion season, in accordance with her expressed wishes and feelings, the sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered to her at her own residence after the close of the public services of the sanctuary; members of her own family circle, a few of her kindred from a distance, with the two venerable deacons of this church, associates in church fellowship of her departed husband, participating in the ordinance. Her understanding of the significance of the sacred emblems was intelligent and clear, and her humble faith and earnest gratitude touching to witness.

Taking the cup in one hand, and raising the other, she remained for some moments in silent communion of soul with him in whose blood shed for the remission of sins was all her trust.

For days after, and even weeks, she spoke of it as the "great privilege" which she had been permitted to enjoy once more by the kindness of her friends. Not many weeks since she said to the one who came to her bedside in the morning, "I have been awake for a long time contemplating the heavenly inheritance! Oh that inheritance! What is all that earth can give!"

"You love to think of it?"

"That is my all."

At another time, when it was said to her, "you feel that you have a portion beyond this world," she replied, in the words of Watts:

"The Lord shall feed my soul
With more substantial meat,
With such as Saints in glory love,
And such as Angels eat."

Her humility was deep, while her hope was firm. She exhibited that union of self-abasement and strong confidence which is presented to us in Paul as the type of true Christian experience. "I have no righteousness of my own. I am a poor, imperfect creature. I have nothing of my own to offer." Such was her emphatic reiterated testimony. "Yet I trust in the mercy of my Saviour."

"Your trust is in the name of Jesus," it was said to her a few days since as she lay in great weakness.

"Yes!" she promptly replied, with roused energy.

"Jesus, my God, I know his name;
His name is all my trust:

He will not put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost."

With a hope thus based and full of immortality, she did not feel troubled, as she once told me, as she fell asleep at night, whether she should awake in this world or the next.

On the morning of the day of her death, she said again, "I have a hope — mine is not a flimsy hope — mine" — extending, as she spoke, both her hands, on which the damps of death were already gathering, — "mine is a *firm* hope."

It is undoubtedly seldom that in such extreme old age, and in such entire physical prostration the mind should remain so clear and the feelings so fresh.

"I am very forgetful I know," she once said, "but I desire never to forget my dependence and my accountability."

It is but a short time since that her

fresh and grateful sense of the Divine goodness prompted the exclamation, "Oh how I wish that I could sing."

On Independence day a large number of Sabbath school children called in to see her. She spoke to them in a sweet, loving way, and bade them be good children. She always attracted children, and they all loved her. To the last day she remembered old friends who came to see her, drawing them down towards her that she might kiss them.

On the afternoon preceding her death she was asked by the two who stood by her bedside, "Do you know us?" "You are my own dear girls; my arms have held you both."

The day of her death was the anniversary of the birth of her oldest son eighty-one years previous. When reminded of it, she said she remembered that it was

so, and added, "He is gone, and we are all passing away." The same day, breathing with difficulty, she said, "I am almost gone, but my rest will soon be in an eternal state."

An hour before dissolution she prayed — as often — "The Lord have mercy upon me." "The Lord will have mercy, grandmother." "Yes, my child, the Lord *will* have mercy." These were her last words.

The last words addressed to her were, "Grandmother, you will soon be in heaven." No longer able to articulate, she opened her eyes and smiled, and in a few moments ceased to breathe.

The peace of God which passeth all understanding *had* kept her mind and heart through Christ Jesus.

"O death, where is thy sting? Ó grave, where is thy victory?" "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

"Is that a death-bed where the Christian lies?
Yes! but not his; 't is death itself there dies."

The body dies, — the clay tabernacle falls a darkened ruin. The mind goes forth in a glorious resurrection, — goes forth renovated, invigorated, emancipated from all sin, freed from all earthly clogs and fetters; goes forth and onward amidst the scenes of Immanuel's land. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." "Blessed be the God

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation."

May God give us grace, beloved friends, to gather up and learn the lessons taught us by this character and life.

May the surviving son, in *his* old age, having like precious faith, enjoy the same comfort of hope, and seeing light in God's light, rejoice continually in his salvation.

May the grandchildren and all the kindred, confessing that they also are strangers and pilgrims, seek the same celestial city, — exemplifying as they go the power and the beauty of the Christian's faith and hope.

For us all, both old and young, let it be Christ to live, that we in our turn may finish our course with joy, and enter into life.